

**BUILDING OR DISMANTLING NETWORKED INDIVIDUALISM? HOW
SOCIAL GOOD APPS CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL GOOD**

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ABSTRACT

Building Or Dismantling Networked Individualism? How Social Good Apps Contribute to Social Good

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This research study seeks to explore social good apps and the ways they may help facilitate social good. The study also investigates which characteristics of networked individualism are present in these apps, and how this may contribute to the building of social good. By social good, we mean how apps facilitate and offer benefits to the general public, especially in addressing areas of inequality and social injustice found in society. The study also considers whether characteristics of “networked individualism” found in the construction of these apps may influence how social good can be achieved through these technologies. Networked individualism argues empowered networked individuals have replaced tightly bound groups and communities as the prime movers effecting change in society. Through an initial pilot study of 151 apps, five genres of social good apps have been identified. It is the intent to further research characteristics of networked individualism in these apps and whether such correlations encourage or discourage social good.

Introduction

When we hear the term “social good” we often think of groups that work with the poor, and actions such as volunteering at church or local food bank, or donating money to a charitable organization. The term “media for social good”, has become a popular way to describe media designed to facilitate actions of individuals and groups seeking to engage in such activities or support involvement that address issues of inequality or injustice in connection to pro-social movements using media to facilitate their work. At a basic level, social good is understood as “organizing community activism, for empowering citizens, and for coordinating in emergency situations” (Bresciani 2012: pg. 1).

As digital and mobile technology play an increasingly integral role in many people’s daily lives, digital activists and groups working for social good cause, have sought to identify the ways such tools can be used to help them gain support and momentum for their movements. Developing public awareness for their cause by promoting sharing photos, using hashtags, posting a status update related to their causes, have become accessible strategies for drawing attention to their work and initiatives. This draws on what Derek Feldmann (2015) suggests as people’s innate desires to help and being active in addressing problems in the world. Feldmann states, “we know that humans are empathetic and have altruistic behavior—the interest and internalized traits to help those whose welfare may be at risk” (Feldmann, pg. 19). Social media platforms, like apps, “have already been successfully used for social good, for organizing community activism, for empowering citizens, and for coordinating in emergency situations” (Bresciani, pg. 1). Social good and social movements work together so that ultimately people can give back or help raise awareness of a particular issue. One example of technology contributing to social good is through strategically designed apps. Social good apps are mobile applications

that help raise awareness for social issues and allow a way for people to give back to the cause or organization. In this study, we focus on mobile media apps and identifying how they facilitate actions and enable users to become educated or involved in serving the general public through work related to inequality and social justice causes.

According to a study a Georgetown University (2011) three-quarters of Americans believe that supporting and being involved with a social just cause “gives them a sense of purpose and meaning in life and makes them feel good about themselves” (Dynamics Cause of Engagement, 2011, pg. 10). So Apps bring together the desire for personal freedom and choice with communal and social responsibility. However, apps are not always seen as promoting pro-social behavior. Such tools, which are used promote social action have also been framed as promoting self-serving, anti-social behaviors. An example could be the *Red Nose Day App*, and how some people could view this as self-promoting and doing something because other people are, instead of really taking the time to give back to the cause. According to one scholar, “The message is clear: network and build relationships however you can so that you can have the help you need to meet your personal needs” (Wood, 2014 pg. 35). Mobile phone and app culture are seen by some as the epitome of individualized choice and control, promoting “networked individualism”. Here, digital technologies facilitate people’s ability to choose, personalize, and regulate their involvement in their social networks and perceived communities in ways previously not possible to previous generations. Yet, while “networked individualism” is framed by some as a negative term, this was not its original meaning. As Barry Wellman has argued, networked individualism allow individuals to have more freedom “than people experienced in the past because now they have more room to maneuver and more capacity to act on their own” (Raine & Wellman 2012, pg. 385-386).

We suggest social good apps have become a way for people to practice networked individualism in ways that build social good. Through a careful analysis of the design intentions and features of select social good apps, this study demonstrates how such apps reflect key traits of networked individualism. We assert that by enabling individuals to participate in social good movements in unique ways through actions that encourage features of networked individualism, these apps can enable users to contribute to building social good in a network society.

In order to explore the connection between social good apps and networked individuals this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1: What characteristics of networked individualism are represented in social good apps?

RQ 2: How are these traits manifesting in these apps and in what ways can they be seen as connected or contributing to the building of social good?

The hypothesis of research question one is that the majority of social good apps will contribute to networked individualism by encouraging individual practices and engagement over communal involvement and networking. In order to explore these research questions, this paper begins with a discussion of how social good and networked individualism have been framed in media research and consider how this relates to previous studies of mobile applications. Next, the methods and findings of a content analysis of 151 social good apps are presented, highlighting the common categories and design strategies of social good apps and the connections, which can be made between these app features and the traits of networked individualism. Finally, we discuss the implications of these associations for social good apps and how networked individuals positively contribute to social good by having access to these apps. For younger generations who have always grown up with technology, social media apps have become a way

for people to give back and help others. It is not that people are selfish; it is that younger people have not grown up with anything different and have had to learn to incorporate technology in their daily lives. Through identifying the common features of apps designed to address social good building causes found on iTunes, analyzing the focus of these features, and considering ways they facilitate personal choice and action, we are able to show their connection to key traits of networked individualism. Thus, this study shows technologies, which exhibit aspects of network individualism can encourage positive social outcomes and build momentum for groups focused on social justice issues.

CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is focused on the claim that social good apps contribute to the building of social good through leveraging key traits of networked individualism. In order to address this claims, there are several key concepts that need to be more fully explored including the idea of social good, networked individualism, how apps have been researched. While scholars have found that app categorizations are a bit vague, the study has decided to focus on finding apps that are creating initiatives and that are helping people be treated fairly. In addition, it is important to understand the history of social good and social media and what scholars have learned from their research.

Social Good

The term social good can be explained as “organizing community activism, for empowering citizens, and for coordinating in emergency situations” (pg. 1). An example of social good would be joining an organization that helps make sure that a town has clean drinking water. In social good apps that were found in this study, they all contributed to the building of social good. Bresciani and Schmeil have done research on social media platforms for social good. They have found that “social media platforms can do much more for the common good: share computational resources (i.e.,AFRICA@home project), support the organization of events, enhance cause-related communications, direct and shape human behavior, provide free educational resources or support the development of social businesses.

Social good and social justice can be interpreted in different ways. In Michael Reisch’s article Defining Social Justice in a Socially Unjust World, he explains how there are different

aspects of social justice and how the term has evolved. The “labels like good and evil become interchangeable and the meaning of social justice becomes obscured” (Reisch, 2002, pg. 343). In the beginning, social justice was understood as helping a particular group of people with hierarchical inequalities. Over time it has changed, and social work scholars are now focusing on social diversity. He states, “most have viewed social justice as an alternative to charity in that its emphasis is on egalitarianism and mutuality, instead of dominance and hierarchy” (Reisch, 2002, pg. 350).

In Derrick Feldmann’s book, “Social Movements for Good”, he explains how “social movements for good is a defining moment in time in which people, beyond those affected, believe in the power of the issue that affects those who need a voice. They rise up with others to build the awareness and the clout necessary to transform an issue into a cause and a cause into a movement of inspiration.” He defines social movements for good as a “concept that is based on raising awareness of an issue to generate support for the benefit of an aggrieved group” (Feldmann, 2016, pg. 2). Social movements for good play a part in these apps because in order to build social good, a strong movement needs to take place. With social good, many apps have allowed users to be more in control with the way they give back and help others. Apps have become a way to spread the message by sharing links and pictures to Facebook and other social media platforms. Symbolism and starting with the “you” were two of his messages that tied directly to using social media. With symbolism, technology has become a way for companies and organizations to brand themselves and to share their message through social media. With the social good apps, many of the apps have links to their social media accounts so that people can share and like their messages. With starting with the “you”, this ties directly to networked individualism because the individual is the one who is in control. In order for there to be work

done towards social good, it has to start with one person who takes the initiative to make something happen. From there, people can use their networks of people to help gain momentum and support of that particular cause.

Feldmann placed a huge emphasis on symbolism and the power of “you” in his book. In one of the chapters in his book, he focused heavily on symbolism and how “organizations are moving beyond a simple brand and logo and now to a concept of movement symbolism that reflects the story and narrative of the movement for the people” (Feldmann, pg. 65). Movements are now taking a different approach on how to deliver their message and are using a symbol as a way to unite people who share a common interest in a cause. Feldmann explains how he saw symbolism used through social media when the Supreme Court was going to have to rule on marriages for the LGBT community. The red equality logo was seen all over social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Many celebrities took part of this movement by using this red logo on their social media. Corporate brands are using Facebook, Twitter, and the Internet to get their name out by using these symbols as a logo. Social movements for good have focused on using symbolism as something that people can participate in to show their support for the values of the particular campaign. Symbolism is something that has been incorporated into social good apps as a way to contribute to these social movements. In these apps, symbolism is already seen because these apps support their cause by having social media links within their app for people to go share information. Within the app, there are links to social media sites that can help share photos or videos that can help draw in support for the cause. Apps are an easy way to share information on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, where people can like or re share your post. Symbolism is a very easy way for social good apps to help contribute to the building of social good.

The last term from Feldmann's book focused on how "you" is an important part of a social movement. Movements are made by and are for the people, so it has to start with one person to get the movement to begin. Social good is normally looked at helping others in need, but in order to build social good, there needs to be a person who sees the issue and wants to do something about it. Once one person starts to support a cause, and then other people can follow. Although the point is to help others in need, a social good movement needs to start with an individual. Feldmann notes that the individual has become more powerful in social movements than ever before because of the use of technology. By using a social good app, it can help amplify a message and gather more momentum because it creates a shared network of like-minded individuals. In social good apps, many of them have links to social media sites so that people can share and like photos and videos on Facebook, Instagram, and other popular platforms. Facebook and Instagram have become very popular social media sites because of the visuals you can share with people.

In addition to the "you" being an important part of a social movement, it is also important to understand how mobile phones and technology relate to an individual's well-being. Michael Chan, a scholar in Hong Kong has done research on different uses of the mobile phone and how it relates to individuals' subjective well-being and social capital. Although there has been research on how mobiles phones affect communication with people, there was little done on how mobile phones directly impact people's well being. Chan describes social capital as "an individuals' relationships with others provides embedded resources that can be accessed, mobilized and utilized for actions that lead to economic and non-economic gains" (Chan, pg. 100). Many scholars have noted that mobile phones help people maintain social capital because it is helping people to have a continuous relationship with people that they are already have close

ties to. An example of this is that scholars have found that mobile phones are helping people remain close to their family members with that continuous communication. There is not much research to support that mobile phones help people stay connected to their weaker ties, since those are people that they aren't going to talk to on a regular basis. Chan concludes, "mobile online communication, with the array of communicative affordances, such as instant messaging and social network sites, provides the necessary affordances to maintain bridging social capital" (Chan, pg. 106). In the future, Chan notes that it will be important for there to be more research done on mobile phones and to keep in mind the communication resources available to people as well as the different perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of people who use these technologies.

Technology has become a positive thing for social movements because of the amount of people you can reach from a simple photo or video that can be shared. Communications of ACM released an article about smartphone apps for social good and how mobile apps make it easier to create massive impact on social causes. Anbu Anbalagapandian, who works for the Orange Harp ethical mobile marketplace, explained how they understand their millennial audience and make sure that their apps look good so that their message can spread quickly. He also explains how information is now spread at a faster rate with technology and it is easy to use social media to raise awareness of issues. The article focuses heavily on how millennial have a stereotype of being lazy and only care about themselves. App developers disagree with the statement and see how "the millennial generation is connected, conscientious, and ready to combat social ills" (Kugler, 2016, pg. 18).

Facebook is another powerful way to share a message. Summer Harlow, a scholar at the University of Texas, did a study on social media and movements and a Guatemalan justice movement. In May of 2009, a video was released on Facebook of a lawyer named Rodrigo

Rosenberg blaming the Guatemalan president Alvaro Colom for murdering him. Because of this video, many Facebook pages were created, demanding that Colom resign from office. “Scholars tend to view the internet’s role in social movements as two-fold: the internet can facilitate traditional offline activism, enhancing a movement’s existing repertoire by adding email campaigns, online petitions, and even virtual sit-ins to activists’ existing toolbox (Castells, 2001; Juris, 2005), or it actually can create new forms of activism and resistance” (Cardoso and Pereira Neto, 2004; Rolfe, 2005) (Harlow, pg. 5). In this particular case, “rather than simply using Facebook as a forum for talking about justice or criticizing the government, users instead posted comments to mobilize an online and offline movement, organize protests, showcase photos of protests, and actively show their support for the movement” (Harlow, 2012 pg. 14). Previous research on this topic focused more on how the Internet makes it easier to keep current movements. However, Harlow focuses on how the Internet creates offline activism and that movements can be created online and then move offline.

A study was done on the framework for motivating computer science students by adding social good to introductory assignments. The scholars “believe a CSG-Ed approach will better motivate students by providing them with a more comprehensive view of the discipline and its scope for meaningful societal contribution from the very beginning of their CS education” (Goldweber, 2013 pg. 64). They believed by adding social good, it will motivate students by having them become more interested in their career and feeling like that they will have an impact on the world.

In addition, Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies has conducted to research projects on social media. One has been done on understanding the impact of the digital revolution on cause involvement. The other is about how social media motivates action and

drives support for causes. For the dynamics of cause engagement, it is still true that the first way Americans like to get involved in supporting a cause is by donating money, volunteering, learning about the cause, and talking to others about the cause. Although social media is becoming more and more popular, people still prefer the historical ways of getting involved. However, the majority of Americans do recognize the value of social media in helping gaining visibility and support for causes. In conclusion, “integration is the key in a world where social media is expanding and opening new venues for involvement, but, at the same time, the traditional forms of cause engagement remain critical” (Dynamics of Cause Engagement, pg. 38).

In the digital persuasion research, “the decision to visibly support a cause or social issue apparently has less to do with appearing knowledgeable or charitable to their peers, and more to do with influencing others to join them in their support of the cause” (Digital Persuasion, pg. 5). People like to influence others, especially when it is something that they care about. It is also important to note that “among the digitally engaged, social media can indeed compel offline engagement, when prompted by good storytelling, multimedia and social norms—and accompanied by actually have time and money to give” (Digital Persuasion, pg. 14). Although social media and storytelling can be beneficial, people are often times skeptical of online causes. This means that it is extremely important for causes to be credible and seem trustworthy on the Internet.

Networked Individualism

Networked Individualism is a theoretical concept that explains how the individual is the focus of their network. Instead of being a part of just one group, an individual forms their own

range of networks where they have membership in several different groups. Networked Individualism emerged from Barry Wellman when he was studying the social networks of community members in Toronto's East York in 1968. He discovered that individuals were using technologies such as the telephone and automobiles to create their own networks. Wellman developed his ideas that communities have moved from little boxes, to "glocalized" networks, and lastly to networked individualism. In the first stage, "work, community and domesticity have moved from hierarchically arranged, densely knit, bounded groups ("little boxes") to social networks. In networked societies, boundaries are more permeable, interactions are with diverse others, linkages switch between multiple networks, and hierarchies are both flatter and more complexly structured" (Wellman, 2002 pg. 1). By networked individualism he and his team found that "People remain connected, but as individuals rather than being rooted in the home bases of work unit and household. Individuals switch rapidly between their social networks. Each person separately operates his networks to obtain information, collaboration, orders, support, sociability, and a sense of belonging" (Wellman, 2002 pg. 5).

This emerges from the notion of the network society, especially the work of Manuel Castells. He states, "A network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (Castells, 2004, pg. 2). His main argument is that networks have been here for periods of time, but it wasn't until having all of this technology that people could really benefit from it. People were limited by the lack of technology, which is no longer an issue today. This networked structure has always been here, but now is the time we can use it.

This concept is further developed by Wellman and Rainie in their book *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, a way to describe how "people have become increasingly

networked as individuals, rather than embedded in groups” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p.12).

This means instead of an individual being involved in a single community or social group, in a networks society people are drawn to become part of many different groups simultaneously, with varying levels of investment and involvement. While living in a network society means people are becoming less dependent on prescribe social groups (such as family and traditional institutions or affiliation to which they were born) able to make their social own decisions about whom they choose to associate with this does not mean they are less prone to be or desire less to be involved in the building of social good.

Wellman and Lee Rainie in the book *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, use this concept to explains how the individual is the focus of their network. Individuals are incorporating technologies into their everyday lives, and “people are not hooked on gadgets—they are hooked on each other” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, p. 7). This plays into the strong and weak ties. Stronger ties are the relationships you have with close friends. Weaker ties are the relationships you have with acquaintances. Strong ties take place when you are close in distance with someone; an example is when you are home with your family. Weaker ties are when you are far apart from people you have relationships with. According to Rainie and Wellman (2012), “the Internet especially helps to maintain contact with weaker ties: friends, relatives, neighbors, and workmates with whom people are not very close” (p. 13).

They suggest networked individualism can be seen as enacting social connections, which are dynamic, context-specific and varying in depth. This means that while they may appear weaker in comparison to more traditional, static social relations they allow individuals to be involved in multiple groups simultaneously, related to diverse interests. According to Rainie and Wellman (2012), “While weaker, these ties often provide crucial elements of information,

sociability, and support as they seek jobs, cope with health issues, make purchase decisions, and deal with bureaucracies” (p.13). They argue both strong and weak ties are important to help people maintain their valued connections. It is these weaker ties that enable individuals to expand their network and keep in contact with a larger group of people.

This ability to engage in multiple networks supports that individual’s often-transient interests and desires to support a specific cause for a set period of time and no longer just stick to one network or their family to decide. This shows that while investments in a particular group or context related to cultivating social good may be more flexible than in previous generation, the structures and ethos of networked individuals still support and even could be seen to encourage positive social engagement and action through apps. According to Brescani, “social media platforms can do much more for the common good: share computational resources (i.e.,AFRICA@home project), support the organization of events, enhance cause-related communications, direct and shape human behavior, provide free educational resources or support the development of social businesses” (Brescani & Schmeil, 2012, pg. 1).

Although Wellman, Rainie, and Castells all believe in a networked society, there are people who believe that networked individualism is an extremely negative theory and allows individuals just to focus on themselves instead of other people. In a thesis for a masters student at Brigham Young University, Michael Wood, he argues that “The message is clear: network and build relationships however you can so that you can have the help you need to meet your personal needs” (Wood, 2014 pg. 35). He also describes the networked individualism theory as “an example of the destructive, enframing essence of modern technology” (Wood, 2014 pg. 37). Wood sees networked individualism as a negative use of technology and that it only focuses on the user.

Another major argument against networked individualism is presented in a review for the book *Networked* on Cybeorgology, the author argues that a lot of people use technology as a way to avoid interacting with others. The author notes that in the book it stated that “13% of U.S. adult cell owners pretend to use the phone to avoid social interaction”, and that “42% interact on their phone to kill time” (Networked, 2012). It was also noted that there was not enough theory in the book to better support their claims. The big argument with networked individualism is that it is too focused on the individual and less on the relationships with other people.

Despite the critiques of networked individualism, this theory can clearly be seen as a positive theory when applied to apps for social good. These apps are not about benefiting the user, but as a way for the individual to do something good for others. People like to stay connected with others and technology has become a way for people to do that and not be confined to their location. When people are using technology, it is to keep up with other people and to continue to communicate with others. Wellman and Rainie highlight 4 key characteristics of networked individualism in their work: increased personal autonomy, moving from groups to networks, and having both local and distant ties with widespread connectivity.

In this study in particular, there are three traits of networked individualism that are most relevant to these apps: increased personal autonomy, moving from groups to networks, and local and distant ties. With increased personal autonomy, “work has become flexible in the developed world, especially the shift from pushing atoms in manufacturing to pushing bits in white-collar creative work” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, pg. 824). This means that people now have more control and flexibility on how they go about their daily lives. In the apps, it encourages the users to do an action and that the performance equals contribution to social good. For moving from groups to networks, “people live in fluid and changing networks that go well beyond groups and

Facebook” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, pg. 915). People used to believe that they were confined to one particular group and couldn’t belong to several. Now, people have the ability to belong to several groups and move from each one. Apps show how they are moving from groups to networks by enabling sharing through unique links and connections to initiatives and information in the app. With having both local and distant ties people “need to expend effort and sometimes money to maintain their ties near and far; choose whether to phone, visit, or electronically connect with others; remember which members of their network are useful for what sorts of things (including just hanging out); and forge useful alliances among network members who might not previously have known each other” (Rainie & Wellman, 2012, pg. 390). Technology has become a better way for people to connect to both their local and distant ties.

App Research

Apps have become a way for people to make more individual decisions, however, they are not always easy to find on iTunes. According to Bresciani and Schmeil, social technologies can empower anyone to have a positive impact on the society by creating networking effects and initiating community engagement: low budget and few technological skills, coupled with creativity and innovation can transform a social campaign into a worldwide movement with hundreds of followers. Apps for social good can be a great way for people to give back to others by being able to have control and do something simple through a mobile phone or tablet. Many of the apps allow a person to donate money by using a credit card, which is a simple way for people to give back.

The study of mobile apps is still evolving. Apps were created in July of 2008 when Apple launched their app store and there is still much more to be learned about apps. In addition to

Campbell and Bellar's work on religious apps, most of the research about mobile apps focuses on education (Wartella, Ellen, 2015), health apps (Boudreaux, Waring, Hayes, Sadasivam, Mullen, Pagoto, 2014), and brands of apps (Bellman, Potter, Treleaven-Hassard, Robinson, Varan, 2011).

Campbell et al. (2014) in their study of religious apps noted significant challenges in studying certain types of apps in iTunes due to categorization. Their work "highlights the limitations of using iTunes' categories such as Utilities and Lifestyle often do not accurately reflect the focus of religious apps" (Campbell, pg. 167). A similar problem was encountered using iTunes to find apps for social good, as no clear-cut category were found, details related to the identification and sampling process are discussed in more detail in the method section. What is important to note here the lack of identification social good, charity or activism apps in iTunes means some types of Apps may be understudied, such as social good apps, from the mere fact identifying a clear or representative sample is difficult.

In Bellar's (2012) article *Pocket Full of Jesus*, she found that "first and foremost, users who want to find religious apps had trouble doing so due to the navigation and categorization issues on iTunes. However, after users located religious apps, they then took into consideration the ratings and reviews, cost, and word of mouth from others before making their choice" (Bellar, pg. 62). Since there is not a category for religion, it creates more work for the user to find these types of apps. This ties back to the study on social good apps and how there is not a clear category for social good. The iTunes app store can at times be hard to navigate, which made the keyword search on iTunes even more important.

In Miller's (2014) book *The Imaginary App*, the author explains how there have been cultural and technological shifts since apps were created in 2008. The book explains how there

are both advantages and disadvantages to apps and that a lot of times people do not see the challenges because of how attractive apps seem. “The new demands and expectations of high functionality and operability of mobile gadgets that have been often fetishized by advertising campaigns have a big influence on users’ preference for apps” (Miller, 2014, pg. XIX). People have high expectations for apps to work perfectly when in reality it is just an app and there can be issues with technology at times. The book gives different perspectives on apps and shows that apps can be very attractive and good to use, but at the same time there can be some disadvantages to more advanced technology. While researching apps, it was hard to tell how often people used the apps, which will need to be further investigating in the future. Many of the social good apps seemed very user friendly, however, there was not any information to back that up. It will be important for scholars to focus more attention on the user implications of apps and what draws in users.

Bellar’s article about religious apps, she points out that “none of the available studies in this area collect or analyze data from app users; this is a gap the current research seeks to fill” (Bellar, pg. 115). This is an issue when studying apps, because there is not any data that explains from a user about how they use these apps or choose to use them. In general, there is not enough research about app studies and this will need to be further researched in the future. Bellar was able to discover that her “findings indicate that the participants as a mobile audience use both online and offline resources when making a decision on what type of app to download, supporting the networked religion framework” (Bellar, pg. 123). Because this was the case, the study became even more important to find other apps that do not have a category on iTunes.

This research shows how just like religious apps, there is not a clear category for social good apps, yet many apps can be found on iTunes that contribute to the building of social good.

Apps help contribute to networked individualism, by allowing the user to be in control of their own network and decide with how they want to give back. Apps are tied into social media, which allows social good movements to build and to create more activism. Although there is not much research done on apps in general, this study gives a new perspective on apps and how they can build social good.

Summary

There are three key takeaways from this literature review. The first is that social good can be seen through technology as a way of “organizing community activism, for empowering citizens, and for coordinating in emergency situations” (Brescani & Schmeil, 2012, pg. 1). The second is that networked individualism is where the individual is now the center of their network and they can choose who they want to interact with and what they will be involved in. With the help of technology, individuals have become better abled to operate in this networked society. Wellman, Rainie, and Castells are three scholars who support living in a networked society and believe with the three different shifts in technology, we are now able to fully operate in them. Networked individualism contributes to the building of social good because mobile phone apps are an easy way for people to get involved whether it is playing a game against their friend and having to donate money to an organization or finding out information about where to volunteer. The third takeaway is that although there are not clear categorizes on iTunes for social good, there are still apps that are out there that contribute to the building of social good and show how networked individualism can be positive. In the research, four specific traits of networked individualism will be seen, which include: increased personal autonomy, moving from groups to networks, having local and distant ties, and widespread connectivity. Networked individuals are

able to contribute to this building of social good by using their networks to find apps to connect to. In order to find apps for social good, multiple searches on iTunes will need to be used as well as finding categories to place the apps into. This research is important to show how there are over a hundred social good apps that are helping bring changes to inequality. In addition, networked individualism is a positive theory that is seen in these social good apps and shows how powerful individuals are when they become passionate about organizations and doing something for other people. Individuals aren't selfish, and with the help of technology, they can have a greater impact in these social good movements.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The initial study aim was to identify over 100 social good apps and identify what common design intentions and themes they represented. Social Good apps are defined as apps designed to help individuals learn about or support a cause or organization doing work on a social issue aimed at the betterment of society. This study is based on a content analysis of 151 social good apps; this includes apps identified in the pilot and full study. Attention was given to feature allowing users to connect with information, others involved initiatives, volunteering opportunities actions they could perform to raise awareness or funds for social good focused groups and issues. Discussion of the sampling and content analysis processes are found below.

Sampling Strategy

The first search that was conducted was on social good apps. Just as Campbell and Bellar had explained, there are not clear categories on iTunes, so thorough research needed to be conducted to find social good apps. This search began with three different search categories: social justice, human trafficking, and poverty. Searches were conducted using iTunes search function and in Google by using several keywords. First, an iTunes search for apps with general connections to ideas of social good using the following words and phrases: give, eco, volunteer, social good apps, charity, volunteering, and give back. In Google, a search under the terms “social good apps” and “social justice” produced lists of articles profiling a variety of app designed to help other learn about a variety of social justice causes, and perform actions related to volunteering or giving charity to social good causes. These apps were then searched out in iTunes to find out more information and see if they could be included within the studies working

definition of a social good app. The final decision on whether or not to add an app to the list was made if the iTunes description offered a concrete connection to a recognizable social good or justice cause. Each time an app was found related to social good, it was added to the excel database where information on name of the app, the app website, a description, its location on iTunes, if there is a religious affiliation, how it was found, and what tag/keyword it was under. This initial search turned up 35 apps. The second search was then conducted searching for apps that address causes related to poverty. Google and iTunes search were used as well and the same reasoning when deciding if an app should be added. By using the keyword “poverty”, 67 apps were easily identified. A similar search was conducted on app related human trafficking, using the keywords sex slavery, human trafficking, and slavery. It also took searching key words to find them. The final total of the pilot study was 131 apps found through the various searches.

A full study was conducted to see which apps were still in use and if there were any new apps to add. Each app from the list of 131, were searched on iTunes to check if the app was still active on iTunes. It was all documented in an excel spreadsheet. In addition, the definitions of the apps were thoroughly reviewed and if the definition didn’t focus on contributing to social good, it was taken off the list. Another iTunes search was used to see if there were any newer apps that had been created since the first search or ones that could have been missed in the spring. 20 new apps were added to the list and fit the definition for social good. The final list of apps that are still currently working and show characteristics of networked individualism is 107. The total number of apps that have been used for this research is 151 apps.

Data Collection and Analysis

A qualitative content analysis study of iTunes app descriptions and iTunes categories was then done. Now that there were apps for each of the three categories, it was important to conduct an analysis to see if there were any ties to institutional and religious affiliations. It was extremely important to understand the background of each app, in order to create new categories of apps for social good. The more information on each category, the easier it was going to be for the qualitative content analysis. After conducting the three searches, it was then time to figure out which new categories the apps would fall under. For each app, the information had to be analyzed and include a one-sentence explanation of what the app does. The information being analyzed came from the codebook, which had the web address, iTunes description of the app, iTunes category, and how the app was found. Each app's description had to be thoroughly read, to be able to determine whether or not the app would fit the description as a social good app. After doing this for each app, it was easier to see how the apps differentiated and how it would be possible to create new categories. The excel spreadsheet helped look at the information in a clear way so that new categories could be created. At the end of last spring, each app was thoroughly studied to find traits of networked individualism and to decide whether or not an app possesses that trait. The three different app categories came into play because it helped split up the 131 apps.

The focus of the project was on exploring both the connections between social good apps, and extent to which they display key characteristics of networked individualism. These findings have been compared to the claims made in the book titled, *Social Movements For Good*, which explores what are the key features need to be present in social activities in order to support or build social good within a given context. In the book, it is clearly explained why and how social

movements are built and how they support others. It was important to have more knowledge about how social movements and whether or not it is present in these apps. Research has helped further refine and explore these app categories. By having more knowledge on social good and social movements, it made it easier to differentiate the key characteristics seen in these apps and develop the app categories. In addition, more content analysis has been conducted within these apps to make accurate connections and assessments about the present and effect of networked individualism within social good apps. It was important to carefully and thoroughly review the apps several times to be able to have the most accurate definitions and categories for these apps and to see which characteristics of networked individualism are seen.

CHAPTER III

IDENTIFYING COMMON CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL GOOD APPS

Through a content analysis of the 151 social good apps five common genres emerged, representing several distinct design focuses. These were identified through noting the commonalities in the subject focuses of these apps, along with the types of information provided, actions encouraged or activities users could engage in related to social good themes. The five genres were: organizational-based, practice-based/initiative, activism, educational, and games & entertainment apps. Each genre and its core action traits or technological affordances are explained below.

Organizational Apps

Organizational apps (n=37) are defined as apps that are related to a specific organization and volunteer networks. These apps primarily focus on information on social good initiatives within the organization, prominence of social good initiatives, and information on social good outside of the organization. Organizational-based apps can be further broken down into three traits: provides information on the organization's social good initiatives, highlights a significant feature or minor feature of the social good initiative, and shows the networks of like-minded social good groups. Two examples of organizational-based apps are the *Rescue Foundation* app and the *Compassion Magazine* app. The *Rescue Foundation* app, fits the three traits of an organizational app because it provides information about the nonprofit organization and what they do, it provides links to outside activities that help ensure women's human rights, and then lastly it shows the networks of people who support women's rights by having links to Facebook and providing activities that people can get involved in. With the *Compassion Magazine* app, it

also shows the three traits by providing information on the children that have been sponsored, it highlights current issues that children in poverty are facing, and it shows how these networks of people have impacted these children's lives. The Rescue Foundation app and Compassion magazine apps are both under the organizational genre because of each app directly shows the three traits and focus on the specific organization and the volunteer networks that have been created.

Practice-based/Initiative Apps

Practice-based/initiative apps (n=36) are apps that allow an individual to complete a specific task in order to give back to a charitable organization or cause. Practice-based/initiative apps include three specific traits: activities that users can do and are linked to tangible support, sharing pictures on social media which yields support, and gives users an incentive to donate. *Lose Weight or Donate* and *Walk for a Dog* are two examples of practice-based/initiative apps. In the *Lose Weight or Donate* app, the individual has to set a daily calorie goal for themselves and if they don't meet the goal, they have to donate to a local food bank or donate cans of non-perishable goods. This directly shows the three traits because the individual user is linked to an organization to donate to, the individual can share their support by sharing with others that they have donated money to a food bank, and if the individual does not meet their goal they will have to donate. In the *Walk for a Dog* app, the app keeps track of how far an individual walks their dog and in return it donates money to the local animal organization of your choice. In addition, the individual can share their success via Facebook and Twitter, and also it allows the individual to set goals for themselves on how far they will walk. Practice-based/initiative apps use these three specific traits so that it allows users to have an easy way to give back through their phone.

Activism Apps

Activism apps (n=32) are apps that focus on facilitating action, encouraging action, and reporting data. The three traits for activism apps include: allowing users to report data for their donation or action towards a specific cause, encouraging people to become active, and explaining why the issue is important. Two examples of activism apps are *Givvr* and *SeeClickFix* app. In the *Givvr* app, it supports activism and contains the three traits by focusing on raising awareness of charities by simply sharing and watching videos. By watching and sharing videos, it encourages people to learn about the charity and then donate money. The *SeeClickFix* app encourages activism by allowing individuals to see and share non-emergency issues happening in their neighborhood. After individuals see the issue, they can submit a service request and then engage in public dialogue by discussing and sharing information about the issue. It shows the three traits by focusing on reporting issues, explaining to neighbors why it is important, and encouraging people to do something about it by being vocal. Activism apps use the three traits to help encourage action and report data.

Educational Apps

Educational apps (n=28) are informational apps that focus on a cause or organization. The three traits for education apps include: app provides ways to stay updated with the news, and provides factual information about the cause, and is a resource used to help others. Two examples of educational apps are *Understanding Human Trafficking* and the *DiplomApp*. In the *Understanding Human Trafficking* app, it relates to the three traits by providing human trafficking news, providing factual information about human trafficking, and is an educational resource for people who want to learn more about the human trafficking issue and how it affects

children. The DiplomApp specifically uses the three traits by focusing on human trafficking issues, providing factual information from the U.S. Department of State, and is a viable resource to people about human trafficking issues in the U.S. Educational apps are resource for individuals to use by providing factual information and being another resource people can use to stay updated on social justice issues.

Games and Entertainment Apps

Lastly, games and entertainment apps (n=18) can be described as apps that provide a fun way for people to focus on a particular issues or cause. The three traits for games and entertainment apps include: games that give information to the user about the cause, games and activities that have the person do something fun for a cause or initiative, or games that are just for fun and are not related to the cause. Two examples of games and entertainment apps include the *NBC Red Nose Day* app and the FoodShareFilter app. The *NBC Red Nose Day* is an app that is for entertainment purposes by allowing people to share on photo on social media with the red nose. The Red Nose campaign is about raising awareness about children living in poverty. The FoodShareFilter app is an app that provides people with more entertainment by getting to share neat picture of food and joining in on a campaign to fight hunger and malnutrition. Games and entertainment apps focus on doing something fun through the app and sharing it with people to raise awareness for a campaign.

Summary

From the five identified genres, it was found that practice-based apps were the most prevalent with 36 of the 151 apps fitting in that genre. The activism-based apps were the second

most prevalent apps with 32 of the 151 apps. Although there is no clear category on iTunes for social good apps, this study found that apps focused on social good could be linked to one of five major genres. Together, studying the specific genres of apps show how social good apps are designed to help individual engage in activities that can potentially build social good through mobile culture, by providing new ways for people to volunteer, and contribute to social justice causes through technology. Through this discussion of features and core characteristics of social good app studied we begin to see connection between design features and the four traits of networked individualism discussed previously. This next section maps these correlation and points to what this might mean regarding networked individualism and how this plays a role in social good apps.

CHAPTER IV

CONNECTION BETWEEN SOCIAL GOOD APPS AND NETWORKED INDIVIDUALISM

Through our analysis, four specific characteristics of networked individualism traits were seen as manifest in these apps. These four traits of networked individualism, identified by Wellman and Rainie and discussed previously in this article, can be linked to specific technological and design features discovered in the five genres, which helped identify these connections. This section outlines how the traits of increased personal autonomy, moving from groups to networks, having both local and distant ties, and widespread connectivity were identified in these apps.

Increased Personal Autonomy

In this theory of networked individualism, individuals have now become more flexible in their work life and are able to focus on creative work. This ties into the trait of increased personal autonomy, which focuses on how an individual now has more control and flexibility in their life. A feature in these apps is how it allows individuals to give back easily through their phone and complete an action so that they donate money to a cause or organization. Two examples of apps that have the increased personal autonomy trait are *Charity Miles* and *TangoTab*. In *Charity Miles*, the app works by selecting a specific organization that the individual wants to give back to and then the app tracks the distance the individual walks, runs, or bikes. It is allowing the individual to have flexibility in their schedule by picking an exercise activity of their choice and in return they are donating money to particular cause. This directly

relates to increased personal autonomy, which gives users more flexibility and creativity when using the app. In addition, the *TangoTab* is an app that has partner restaurants so that people can go to a restaurant and use the apps so it feeds a person in need. It gives the user flexibility by having a list of partner restaurants and being able to use their phone to assess the app. Increased personal autonomy allows the user to have more flexibility and control with how they are giving back. This ties back to social good apps and how the app is giving the individual more flexibility and control on how and how much they donate.

Moving from Groups to Networks

With networked individualism, people have moved from groups to networks by going from belonging to just one particular group to now having multiple, more broad networks. In social good apps, providing links and connections to initiatives and information can show the trait of moving from groups to networks. Two examples of moving from groups to networks are the *Texas DPS App* and *Social Impact App*. The *Texas DPS App* is interactive and provides resources on the sex offender registry and information human trafficking. It provides useful information for people. This helps connect individuals to different networks by gaining more insight to human trafficking and providing links to other groups that can help. The *Social Impact App* is another example of moving from groups to networks. In the app, it uses the individual's location to find social purpose businesses near them. It has different type of businesses including: food and coffee, arts and crafts, general retail, social enterprise, and other categories. This allows individuals to move from groups to networks by being provided a list of places that they can go and connect with because it relates to social good initiatives. Social good apps use

the trait of moving from groups to networks by providing links and connections to initiatives and information.

Local and Distant Ties

A local and distant tie is a trait of networked individualism where people are now not limited by their location to stay connected with people. Technology has become a way for people to connect to both their local and distant ties. Apps show this trait by helping amplify a message while gathering more movement momentum through a shared networked of like-minded activists. It also connects to a centralized source. Two examples of apps having both local and distant ties are the *MyCru App* and the *Horyou App*. The *MyCru App* shows the connections between local and distant ties because it allows individuals to share their thoughts with others and track your own personal growth. The individual is not limited by their location and hear the stories of other people who may be near or far. The *Horyou App* is another example of local and distant ties because the app lets individuals connect to other people who all want to advocate for a humanistic approach to technology. The app is joining together a group of like-minded activists so they can be a part of a new network of people.

Widespread Connectivity

In networked individualism, widespread connectivity is a trait that helps people communicate and gain information in a more powerful, personal way. With technology, it helps create this widespread connectivity by allowing users to have new ways to communicate and share information. It is now not just word of a mouth that can help spread a message; apps can be linked to social media sites to help spread a message. There are two examples of apps that use the widespread connectivity trait, which are the *Volunteering Quotes App* and the *Fotition app*.

In the *Volunteering Quotes* app, individuals can find quotes about volunteering and helping others and then share it with people through text message, email, Facebook, or Twitter. This is showing widespread connectivity because individuals are sharing a message to others by using an app. In the *Fotition* app, individuals can use their photos and turn them into money. Individuals share photos on their social media sites in order to raise awareness of a cause and so that sponsors will make donations on your behalf. This relates to widespread connectivity because it is using a photo to share a message and reach others. Overall, widespread connectivity is a trait of networked individualism that helps individuals spread a message through social media sites in order to reach many people.

Conclusion

The hypothesis of question one was that a majority of social good apps would contribute to networked individualism by encouraging individual practices and engagement over communal involvement and networking. When calculating the apps, it was found that moving from groups to networks (31%) and having local and distant ties (33%) ended up being the two key traits of networked individualism that were most dominant. This showed that the hypothesis was wrong because it wasn't increased personal autonomy that ended up being the dominant trait. Moving from groups to networks and having local and distant ties are focused on individuals joining multiple groups and staying close to people who are close and far away. It will be important for scholars to continue to study apps and focus more on users and how they use apps. The second research question that was studied throughout the project was how does the connection contribute to or deter to the building of social good. All of the 151 apps help contribute to the building of social good by focusing on new ways people can incorporate technology to giving

back to others. All apps were placed into the five common categories of apps and have a different way of contributing to social good. Social good is not just about giving money to charitable organizations, but it is also about building a network of people and making those connections so that social movements may be created.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The overall benefit from this study is that it offers a list of social good apps that contribute to the building of social good although there is not a clear social good categorization currently available on the iTunes store. Social good apps can further be divided into the five common categories, which include: organizational-based, practice-based/initiative, activism, educational, and games and entertainment. It also shows how networked individualism can be looked at as positive theory that applies to the study and use of apps. The majority of the apps had the traits of moving from groups to networks (31%) and having both local and distant ties (33%). Wellman, Rainie, and Castells all believe that we live in a networked society and it is important for users to be the center of the network and belong to multiple groups. Apps have the power to keep people connected to others that share similar interests and passions. Not to mention, apps have become a powerful source of information and make it easier to give back and help others. It is important to note that studying apps can be challenging due to the lack of research and iTunes not having clear categories on the app store. There are a few areas that will need to be explored further with these social good apps, which include: user take up, use intentions versus design intentions, and more detailed correlation between app design and social good.

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